1. The Challenge

Supermarkets have a big role to play in reducing food insecurity. Supermarkets need to move away from the current food redistribution model that doesn’t tackle the root causes of insecurity; and move towards more ethical and sustainable solutions.

2. The Research

Research from The University of York investigated the relationship between supermarkets and food charities, and whether they support an ethical and sustainable solution to food insecurity.

The Research team:
- undertook a literature review;
- worked together with Co-op, engaging in knowledge exchange;
- and conducted a workshop with food charity practitioners and hosted a webinar with a panel of experts (academics, charity groups, and Co-op).

3. The Findings and Recommendations

WORK TOWARDS ALIGNED, COMMON GOALS

Food redistribution (unsold or unsellable food) cannot solve the systemic root causes of food insecurity. To address this, partnerships between supermarkets and food charities have an aligned common goal reflecting the values and ideals of ethical and sustainable food insecurity reduction.

CREATE EQUITABLE, STRONG RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships between supermarkets and charities aren’t aligned around common goals and values. An example of this is supermarkets donating large quantities of a single food a charity cannot give away before it expires. To prevent this, relationships between supermarkets and charities need to be equal, strong and consistent to tackle food insecurity.

APPLY SUPERMARKETS’ SHARED VALUES AND GOALS THROUGHOUT BUSINESS AND SUPPLY CHAINS

Supermarkets’ own policies, structures and practices can contribute to food insecurity within their own business and supply chains, such as pay and allocation of hours, putting staff at risk. To resolve this, supermarkets need to apply shared values and goals throughout their business and supply chains to limit the chance of contributing to the problem, such as: supporting poverty alleviation initiatives; paying a Living Wage Foundation real living wage with proper allocation of working hours; and lobbying government action on reducing poverty and inequality.